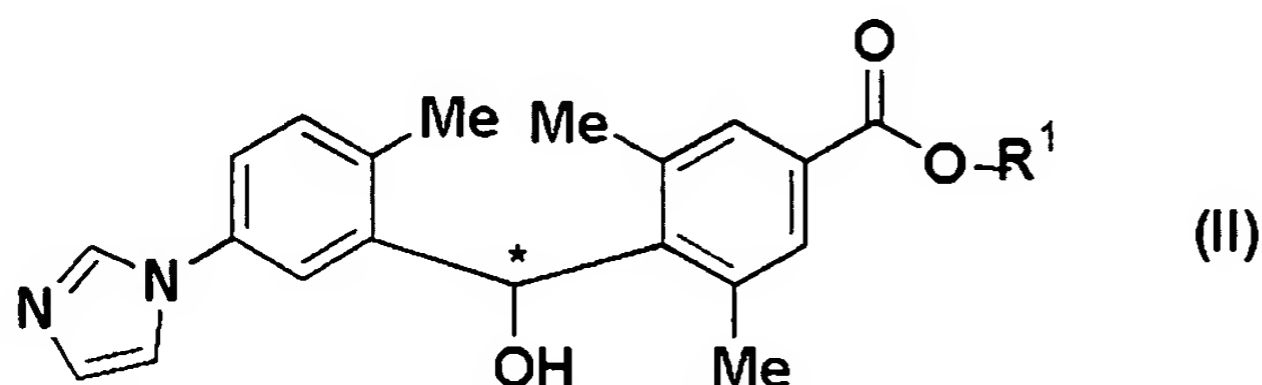
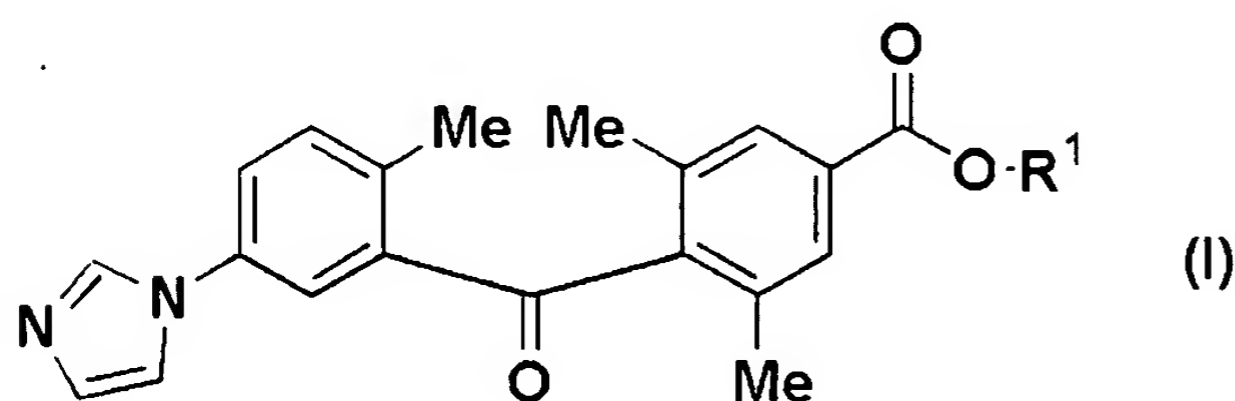


Amendments to the Claims

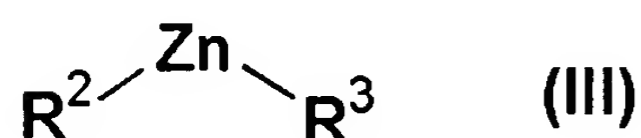
1. **(Original)** A method of preparing optically active 4-[hydroxy[5-(imidazol-1-yl)-2-methylphenyl]methyl]-3,5-dimethylbenzoic acid represented by the following formula (II)



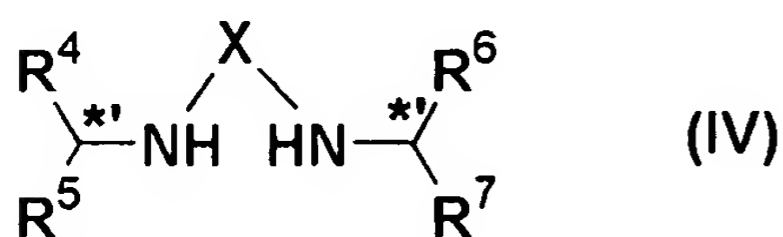
wherein COOR¹ is a carboxylic acid or a carboxylate and the carbon atom with * is an asymmetric carbon atom, or an ester thereof, from 4-[5-(imidazol-1-yl)-2-methylbenzoyl]-3,5-dimethylbenzoic acid represented by the following formula (I)



wherein COOR¹ is as defined above, or an ester thereof, which comprises reacting the compound represented by the formula (I) with a silane agent in the presence of a zinc compound represented by the following formula (III)



wherein R² and R³ are each independently a lower alkyl group or a lower alkoxy group, or R² and R³ in combination show an alkylendioxy group optionally having substituent(s), and an optically active diamine compound represented by the following formula (IV)



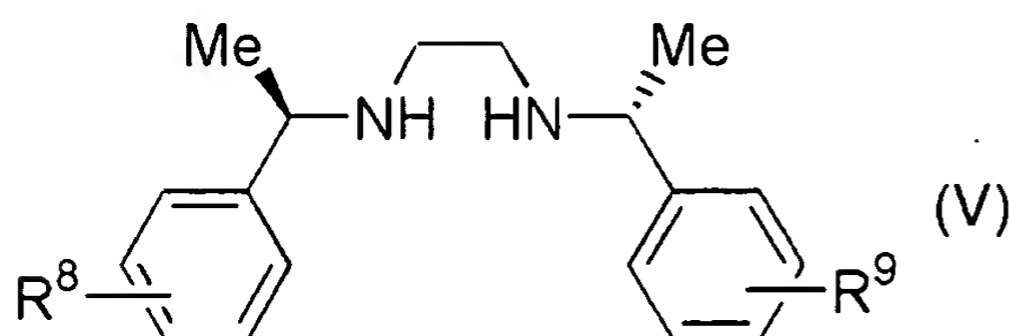
wherein R^4 and R^6 are each independently a lower alkyl group, R^5 is an aryl group optionally having substituent(s), R^7 is an aryl group optionally having substituent(s) or a lower alkyl group, X is an alkylene group or a cycloalkylene group, and one or both of the two carbon atoms with * is(are) asymmetric carbon atom(s).

2. **(Original)** The method of claim 1, wherein R^1 is an alkyl group optionally having substituent(s), a cycloalkyl group optionally having substituent(s) or an aralkyl group optionally having substituent(s) on the ring and/or the chain.

3. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim 1-~~or 2~~, wherein R^2 and R^3 are each independently a lower alkyl group.

4. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim ~~3~~ 1, wherein the reaction is carried out in the presence of alcohol or glycol.

5. **(Currently Amended)** The method of ~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 ~~to 4~~, wherein the optically active diamine compound is a N,N'-bis-(1-phenylethyl)ethane-1,2-diamine compound represented by the following formula (V)



wherein R^8 and R^9 are each independently a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, a lower alkyl group, a lower alkoxy group, a nitro group, a cyano group or an aryl group optionally having substituent(s),
or an optical isomer thereof.

6. **(Original)** The method of claim 5, wherein the N,N'-bis-(1-phenylethyl)ethane-1,2-diamine compound is (R,R)-N,N'-bis-(1-phenylethyl)ethane-1,2-diamine or (R,R)-N,N'-bis-[1-(4-bromophenyl)ethyl]ethane-1,2-diamine.

7. **(Currently Amended)** The method of ~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 to 6, wherein the silane agent is selected from the group consisting of trimethylsilane, diethylsilane, triethylsilane, phenylsilane, diphenylsilane, methylphenylsilane, dimethylphenylsilane, diethylphenylsilane, methyldiphenylsilane, tert-butyldimethylsilane, tert-butyldiphenylsilane, trimethoxysilane, diethoxysilane, triethoxysilane, tributoxysilane, triphenoxysilane, (trimethylsiloxy)dimethylsilane, bis(trimethylsiloxy)methylsilane, triisopropoxysilane, tris(trimethylsiloxy)silane, tris(trimethylsilyl)silane and polymethylhydrosiloxane.

8. **(Original)** A method of preparing an optically active 4-[hydroxy[5-(imidazol-1-yl)-2-methylphenyl]methyl]-3,5-dimethylbenzoic acid ester which comprises reacting 4-[5-(imidazol-1-yl)-2-methylbenzoyl]-3,5-dimethylbenzoic acid ester with polymethylhydrosiloxane in the presence of zinc di-lower alkyl and an optically active diamine compound represented by the formula (V).

9. **(Original)** The method of claim 8 further comprising a reaction in the presence of alcohol or glycol.

10. **(Original)** The method of claim 9 further comprising a reaction in the presence of ether.